

Book Reviews

Old Testament Theology, Vol. I, By Horst DIETRICH Preuss; tr. By Leo G. PERDUE, The Old Testament Library, Westminster, John Knox Press, Louisville, Kentucky, 1991, Pp. xii+372.

Making use of the most recent scholarship and research available in the OT studies and following the hallowed traditions of OT theologies as propounded by Walter Eichrodt, Gerhard von Rad and others belonging to the classical German School of thought, Preuss has brought out a splendid volume of OT Theology which is remarkable for its clarity of presentation, high quality of research, comprehensiveness of a wide field of study, an up-datedness of scholarly enquiries and a personal critical contribution, to crown it all.

Leo G. Perdue deserves our thanks for making this valuable book available to the English reader. Select index of Biblical citations and an index of Subjects (355-372) are additional blessings to the reader in a hurry or with a query. Whenever and wherever available, John Knox Press has also provided a correlation between the important German bibliographical references cited by Preuss and the English translations of those works as can be verified in the Notes (269-353).

In the words of Preuss himself his aim is to present "as fully as possible the witness of the world of the OT" (xi) with two particular interests of his own, namely, "to discover the essential structure of the faith of scripture that resides both behind and in the OT" (xi) in its own historical and social milieu and to describe briefly "this social and cultural environment that is ever becoming clearer to us" (xi). In the process the author has not missed the wood for the tree, since his major objective remains the theology and the faith of Israel as revealed in the OT, namely, "YHWH's

historical activity of electing Israel for communion with his world and the obedient activity required of this people (and the nations)" (25).

The format of the book consists of two parts with an introductory chapter dealing with the History, Methodology and Structure of 'Theology of the OT' wherein the author presents the history of scholarship from Gabler up to G von Rad and after with regard to their understanding of "the theological problems posed by the multiplicity of OT witnesses in their context" (1), which according to him, is not a Theology that has the OT as a subject of study, but rather a Theology which the OT itself contains and presents (1). Hence he sets forth in this book a Theology of the OT which "seeks to inquire after several related elements: the appropriate center for the OT, the typical features of YHWH faith, and the decisive and formative components that comprise its fundamental structures" (23).

Part one of the Book which is titled "Laying the Foundation" consists of two chapters (Chs. 2 & 3), ch. 2 dealing with an "Overview of the OT's statements about Election" and ch. 3 explaining "The Election and Obligation of the People". The unifying theme of OT theology, according to Preuss is the Election. Hence both these chapters deal elaborately with the wealth of Biblical statements about the Acts of Election by YHWH, the election of the individual as well as the people, the election as a historical activity and the subsequent human responses to the God of election and the covenant (23). Chapter 3 in a special way deals with Israel as a people and as a community of faith, the Exodus event and the Sinai tradition, the covenant formula and the wilderness wandering, the Law with special reference to the Decalogue, monotheism and idol worship, the gift of the Land, its ownership, and finally YHWH as warrior in favour of Israel and also sometimes against Israel (137).

In part two: YHWH as the subject of the Historical acts of Election, ch. 4 deals with the God who elects: His Names and Titles, His Acts and His powers of Activity and His Nature. The two basic names of God: YHWH and Elohim and their variations in the different sources are first dealt with. Since YHWH acts in the present "as a power... active upon the earth" (159), the numerous possibilities of this power such as "the Angel of YHWH", "the Blessing of YHWH", "the Justice of YHWH", "the Glory of YHWH", "the Wisdom of YHWH", etc. are carefully explained. Further, the author portrays the notion of YHWH the Creator as well as the Revealer. Lastly, in a subtitle on the "nature" of YHWH the author deals with some interesting topics such as YHWH's eternity, His Jealousy, His being near and far as revealed through anthropomorphisms and anthropopathisms (239-249) etc.

In the final chapter (ch. 5) two different worlds: the world of God (YHWH's places of dwelling, the Ark, the Tent, the court of YHWH) and the world distant from God (Demons, Satan, Sheol the Kingdom of the Dead) are briefly touched upon. The reviewer would have liked to see a brief treatment of belief in the resurrection and immortality which pervade the Wisdom books (cf. Mitchel Dahood, Anchor Bible, Vol. 17A: Psalms III pp. xli-lij).

On the whole Preuss has done quite a commendable job. His book can be recommended for its thorough investigation, convincing argumentation and judicious synthesis, as one of the best resources of OT theology available today. I hope the 2nd volume will match up to this first one!

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Great Men and Women of the Bible *By Stephen FORTOSIS, St. Paul s, Bandra, Mumbai-400 050, 1997, Pp. 139, Rs. 45, ISBN 81-7109-305-1.*

Fortosis has packed with in the covers of a small book containing 140 pages very interesting, inspiring, informative and instructive lives of 55 people who adorn the Bible, some of them (7) in pairs.

Each of these portraits presents a brief account in a page or two of the character concerned, a short application for the reader (in bold types) and a reference or references in the Bible for further personal re-reading and perusal. The short and pointed vignettes on each of the characters underscore the perennial spiritual values they present to the reader. The portrayals are generally accurate; the interpretations of their words, deeds and characters are quite contextual and the application of each of these to our lives, far from being moralistic, is quite inviting and challenging. The insights one gets from these inspiring portraits would surely lead the reader to get down to the reading of the related scripture passages, which I presume is the hidden agenda of the writer. He has done his job remarkably well.

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